The Acquisition of Aspect in L2 English by Adult Native Speakers of Arabic: L1 Transfer Investigation

By

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Abstract

The study investigates the influence of the native language of Arabic-speaking L2 learners in acquiring L2 English aspect. The research question is: Is there L1 transfer in the acquisition of the semantic interpretations of the perfective and the imperfective aspecual markings in English as L2 by adult native speakers of Arabic? Adopting the first half of the generative theory of Full Transfer/ Full Access Hypothesis which assumes that L1 constitutes the initial state of L2 learners' interlangauge grammar, two hypotheses were tested: 1. H1: Since Arabic and English have similar semantic interpretations of the perfective and the imperfective aspecual markings on accomplishments and achievements, intermediate level adult Arabic-speaking English learners will have no difficulty in acquiring the interpretations of the past simple form and the progressive in both aspecual classes. 2. H2: Since the semantic interpretation of the imperfective aspecual marking for state verbs is different between English and Arabic, intermediate level adult Arabic-speaking English learners will incorrectly accept the use of the progressive –ing on state verbs. Two types of acceptability interpretation tasks were conducted: one for the interaction of the lexical aspecuals (accomplishments and achievements) with the grammatical aspecuals (perfective and imperfective) and the other for the interaction of the lexical aspecual (states) with the grammatical aspecuals. The findings reveal that intermediate level Arabic-speaking L2 learners are sensitive to the semantic distinction between perfective and imperfective aspects on accomplishments and achievements since such a distinction is instantiated in their L1. They also overgeneralize the use of the progressive aspecual on English state verbs because this overgeneralization is initiated in their L1 Arabic. Hence, the study's findings suggest the significant impact of L1 transfer on the acquisition of L2 English aspect.
خلاصة البحث

بحثنا يهدف إلى تأثير اللغة الأم للمتحدثين باللغة العربية على اكتساب واجهة الفعل في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية، وقد طرحت سؤال البحث التالي: هل هناك انتقال للغة الأولى عند اكتساب التفسيرات المفراداتية لصيغ الفعل الماضي والمضارع في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية بواسطة طلاب بالغين متحدثين باللغة العربية؟ في إطار الجزء الأول من النظريةدولة التدريس للانتقال التام والدخول النام (Full Transfer/ Full Access Hypothesis) والتي نفترض أن اللغة الأولى تشكل المرحلة الابتدائية لقواعد المتعلم للغة ثانية، تم اختبار فرضياتين:

الفرضية الأولى: بما أن كل من اللغة العربية واللغة الإنجليزية تشتركن في التفسيرات المفراداتية لصيغ الفعل الماضي والمضارع، فإن تلبية اللغة الإنجليزية ذو المستوى اللغوي المتوسط البالغين والمتحدثين باللغة العربية لواجهة أي صعوبة في اكتساب هذه التفسيرات.

الفرضية الثانية: بما أن التفسيرات المفراداتية لصيغة الفعل الماضي والمضارع على الاعفعال الحسية (states) تختلف بين اللغة العربية واللغة الإنجليزية فإن طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية ذو المستوى اللغوي المتوسط البالغين والمتحدثين باللغة العربية سيقبلون بشكل خاطئ استخدام صيغة الفعل المستمر (المضارع) على الأفعال الحسية.

ولقد تم إجراء نموذج من اختبارات القبول: واحدة تبحث في تأثير تفاعل الواجهات المفراداتية (الأفعال الإتمام والإنجاز) مع صيغ الفعل الماضي والمضارع والثانية. تركز على تفاعل الواجهة المفراداتية (الأفعال الحسية) مع صيغ الفعل الماضي والمضارع. وأثبتت النتائج بأن طلاب الذين كانوا مدركين للفرق الدلالي بين صيغ الفعل الماضي والمضارع على كل من أفعال الإتمام والإنجاز إذا تم هذا الفرق موجوداً في لغتهم الأم، كذلك أثبتت بأن هذه الطالب عموا استخدام صيغة الفعل المستمر (المضارع) على أفعال اللغة الإنجليزية الحسية وذلك لأن هذا الاستخدام موجوداً في لغتهم الأم.

وبالتالي فإن نتائج هذه الدراسة تشير إلى التأثير المهم للانتقال الأولي في اكتساب واجهة الفعل في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Although the field of second language acquisition has captured the interest of many researchers and linguists all over the world, the process of how an L2 learner comes to possess a language that is not his/her own poses more questions than it answers. Most attention has been paid to the acquisition of syntactic properties and representations (Slabakova, 2000). However, the acquisition of semantics has a growing interest and opens many fields for query. One domain that is rich for investigation is the domain of aspect (Gabriele and Martohardjons, 2005).

Studies within the domain of aspect have mostly focused on investigating the developmental sequence of L2 tense-aspect morphology without considering the effects of the native language under what is known as the Aspect Hypothesis such as Anderson (1991). To examine both the influence of the native language and the acquisition of the aspectual semantics (that is, the semantic interpretation L2 learners assign to aspectual morphology), researchers have recently adopted the generative approach such as Slabakova (2000), Slabakova and Montrul (2002), Gabriele (2005), and Chin (2006). The present study follows this line of research. It particularly addresses the question of L1 transfer in the acquisition of the semantic interpretations of English aspect by adult Arabic-speaking English L2 learners. The study focuses on the aspectual similarities and differences between English and Arabic in order to investigate to what extent properties of the native language (that is, Arabic) aid or impede the acquisition of the target language (that is, English). An empirical study was conducted for this purpose. This introductory chapter presents in detail the adopted
theoretical framework and essential linguistic information about aspect, its categories and its interaction in both English and Arabic. It also proposes the study hypotheses and demonstrates its main goals and its significance in the realm of the second language acquisition studies. Finally, some important and relevant terms are defined.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The study is an attempt to answer the following question: Is there language transfer in the acquisition of the semantic interpretations of the perfective and the imperfective aspectual markings in English as L2 by adult native speakers of Arabic?

1.3 Theoretical Framework

Generative framework is the theoretical approach adopted in this study. According to Chomsky (1995), both lexical and functional categories form part of Universal Grammar where the lexical categories provide the semantics of a sentence while the functional categories provide referential and grammatical information to the sentence. Aspect is one of these categories (Ibid). Language acquisition under Universal Grammar framework integrates both lexical and functional categories. As far as aspect is concerned, the acquisition of aspect entails the acquisition of the aspectual markings (that is, forms) as well as the interpretation of such markings (that is, meanings) (Smith, 1991/1997).

Two main issues are addressed within generative theory of language acquisition: UG access and L1 transfer (White, 2003). One of the generative hypotheses that has been tested in the acquisition of aspect is Full Transfer/Full Access (hereafter FT/FA) Hypothesis by Schwartz and Sprouse (1994, 1996) which assumes that L1 grammar constitutes the initial state of L2 learners’ interlanguage grammar and that during the course of L2 development, it is possible for L2 learners to have recourse to UG when properties of L2 grammar are
different from or not instantiated in L1 grammar. Hence, the acquisition is aided when properties of the native and target grammars are the same and is impeded when properties of the native and target grammars are different. L2 learner's ability to acquire properties not available in or different from L1 grammar suggests UG access. Thus, the interlanguage grammar of L2 learners is assumed to be UG-constrained.

With regard to L1 transfer, most L2 acquisition generative researches investigate the acquisition of syntactic properties including aspectual markings (e.g. Duff and Li, 2002). According to Gabriele (2005), there is a growing interest in studying the semantic knowledge where L2 learners are assumed to be constrained by the meanings they assign to structures of L2 grammar. Hence, the semantic theory of generative framework aims at determining "how meaning is structured in a given language and how these structures differ crosslinguistically" (Ibid). Considering the crosslinguistic variation of aspect, the question of whether L2 learners transfer aspectual interpretations from L1 grammar is just investigated. Adopting these UG assumptions, the present study investigates the first half of FT/FA Hypothesis within the domain of aspectual semantics.

1.4 Linguistic Background

1.4.1 Definition of Aspect

Aspect, according to Comrie (1976), refers to the way an event unfolds in time focusing on the internal properties of the event without making reference to the time at which the event takes place. In sentences like he is playing and he was playing, the difference is that of tense. That is, the contrast between is and was denotes to the time where the utterance takes place. On the other hand, in sentences like he played football and he was playing football, the difference is that of aspect, that is, how the action of playing is viewed by the speaker. The
sentence *he played football* denotes a complete bounded meaning where the event is viewed in its entirety while *he was playing football* signifies an incomplete and ongoing meaning where the event is viewed as consisting of phases (Ibid). Aspect is of two types: lexical and grammatical aspect.

### 1.4.2 Categories of Aspect

Lexical aspect is also known as inherent aspect, situation aspect and VP aspect. It refers to the inherent semantic features of verb. The most well-known classification of verbs based on their inherent properties is introduced by Vendler (1957) where verbs can be classified into achievement, accomplishment, activity and state. His typology is based on three semantic features: telicity (whether the event has an inherent endpoint), dynamicity (whether an event requires effort or energy), and durativity (whether an event extends over a period of time) (Shirai and Anderson, 1995). These categorizations are captured in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>States</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Accomplishments</th>
<th>Achievements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Punctual</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telic</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>believe</td>
<td>walk</td>
<td>build (a house)</td>
<td>arrive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Vendler's four-classification of verbs according to their semantic features

According to the table above, the lexical categories of verbs can be expressed as follows: state verbs describe durative non-dynamic situation with no inherent endpoint such as *know* and *need*, activities differ from states in dynamicity and involve mental or physical activity such as *run* and *sing*, accomplishments are ongoing in time but have a clear built-in endpoint
such as *run a mile* and *build a house*, and achievements are like accomplishments in that they are both telic events but achievements denote instantaneous events, that is, they have short or no duration such as *come* and *die*. Gavrusava (2002, 2003) argues that features of accomplishments and activities are collapsed into one class adopting three-way classification based on telicity and durativity. Following other studies, the present study adopts Vendler’s classification to categorize verbs in Arabic.

Grammatical aspect is also known as sentential aspect, viewpoint aspect, or IP aspect. It refers to the grammatical devices such as auxiliaries and inflectional morphology that mark the aspectual distinctions on the verbs morphosyntactically (Smith, 1991/1997). The most common classification of grammatical aspect that has been a subject of many discussions is that of perfective and imperfective (Frawly, 1992). These aspectual devices differ across languages.

The perfective aspect views an event as a complete unit disregarding its internal structure and its process (Comrie, 1967; Smith, 1991/1997). In English, the perfective aspect is marked by the simple past form as in (1).

(1) Mary made a cake. (The whole process of making a cake is included in the event described by the perfective)

On the other hand, the imperfective aspect looks at the event from inside taking into account the internal structure of the event and disregarding its beginning and its completion (Ibid). It is marked in English by the progressive (–ing) as in (2).

(2) Mary is making a cake. (Mary is in the process of making a cake at some point so it is not known whether in fact she finished making the cake or not)
Universal Grammar, as stated earlier, assumes the interaction of the lexical and grammatical aspects in sentences. This interaction varies across languages. According to Smith (1991/1997), in French all markers of grammatical aspect can combine with all of the four lexical classes. On the other hand, English stative verbs are generally incompatible with the imperfective aspect, that is, the progressive as in *John is needing your help. Since the scope of the paper is limited to examine the effect of Arabic as L1 on the acquisition of aspect in English as L2, the aspectual markings and interpretations in both are captured in the following subsection.

1.4.3 Aspect between English and Arabic

In English, the perfective and imperfective aspectual distinction is realized by the simple past inflectional morphology (-ed) and the progressive (-ing) respectively as in (1) and (2) repeated below.

(1) Mary made a cake. (The perfective)

(2) Mary is making a cake. (The imperfective)

With regard to the interaction of the grammatical aspect with the lexical aspect, the perfective aspectual marking (that is, the past simple form) can combine with all the four lexical aspectual classes: accomplishments, achievements, activities and states. The perfective encoding the accomplishments and achievements entails viewing the event as completed as in (3) and (4).

(3) John built a sandcastle. (Accomplishment)

(4) He came to school early. (Achievement)
However, according to Chin (2006), the perfective aspectual marking on the activities and states render neutral interpretation. The perfective does not necessarily present activities and states with complete interpretation. A simple test can be done to show this property. For example, a sentence with the past simple activity is possible to be combined with a sentence entailing an incomplete interpretation as in (5a).

(5)  a. We walked in the park but we did not finish the whole walk.

   b. We walked in the park and we finished the whole walk.

(5a) denotes an incomplete interpretation while (5b) has a complete interpretation. Neutral interpretation means that activities under the perfective aspect can have either perfective (complete) or imperfective (incomplete) interpretations (Ibid).

With respect to the imperfective aspectual marking, accomplishments and activities can be encoded with the progressive to denote an event in progress as in (6) and (7), and achievements to denote an event leading to an endpoint as in (8).

(6) She is washing the dishes. (Accomplishment)

(7) Jack is singing. (Activity)

(8) The plane is arriving. (Achievement)

As for states, they are generally incompatible with the progressive marking as in (9) "since this would involve an internal contradiction between the stativity of the verb and the nonstativity essential for the progressive" (Comrie, 1976). That is, state verbs do not have a process component necessary to view the situation as dynamic with successive stages- such a view is denoted by the progressive. Yet, there are certain states that can combine with the progressive to denote a temporary state as in (10).
(9)  *John was needing your help.

(10) Mary is being stupid.

Sentence (10) does not refer to Mary's intelligence but to her behavior at a certain point. The progressive being compatible with states is restricted to a limited number of states in appropriate contexts.

With regard to Arabic, the perfective and imperfective distinction is marked by the perfective (PFR) and imperfective (IMP) forms, usually referred to as the past and present forms respectively as in (11) and (12) (Ryding, 2005).

(11) kataba   Ali   ad-daras

3msg.write.PRF   Ali   the.lesson

Ali wrote the lesson.

(12) ya-ktub   Ali   ad-daras

3msg-write.IMP   Ali   the.lesson

Ali is writing the lesson.

The use of the term "present" to denote the imperfective is not to be confused with the present tense. Its use does not entail that the imperfective occurs only in the present tense. Aspect, as defined earlier, refers to the structure of an event irrespective of its time reference, that is, tense. Consequently, in order to denote a past progressive event in Arabic, 'ka:n-a', which is the past form of the verb 'be', can be used in conjunction with the present form of the verb (the imperfective) as in (13)- equivalent in meaning with the past progressive in English.
At first, it may seem that both Arabic imperfective and English progressive are equivalent in meaning. However, Arabic imperfective verb form has a further distinction, that is, it can encode progressive and habitual meanings (Ibid) as in (14) while English lexicalizes the habitual meaning by the use of 'used to' or 'would'.

(14) ka:na yu-ma:ris at-tenis

was 3msg-practice.IMP the-tennis

= He was practicing tennis. (Progressive meaning)

= He used to practice tennis. (Habitual meaning)

With respect to the interaction between grammatical and lexical aspects, all the lexical aspectual categories in Arabic can be expressed by both the perfective and imperfective forms. The perfective form on accomplishments, achievements and states denote a complete interpretation as in (15), (16) and (17) respectively.

(15) Ahmad Ha:l-l-a al-wajeb

Ahmad 3msg.do.PER the-homework

Ahmad did the homework.

(16) waSal-t Mona

3fsg.arrive.PER Mona
Mona arrived.

(17) Ali fahim-a ad-daras

Ali 3msg.understand.PER the-lesson

Ali understood the lesson.

With activities, the perfective can have a neutral viewpoint. The same test for English activities can be applied here, that is, combining a sentence with a perfective activity with a sentence entailing an incomplete interpretation as in (18).

(18) ya:na-t Salma lakin-ha lam tu-nhi al-ʔuŋyaḥ

3fsg.sing.PER Salma but-3fsg not 3fsg.finish.PER the-song

Salma sang but she did not finish the song.

As for the imperfective aspect, it is compatible with all the aspectual classes: accomplishments and activities to denote an ongoing event, and achievements to denote an event leading to an endpoint. State verbs are generally compatible with the imperfective form to encode an extension of a state over a period of time which is almost always expressed by the past simple form in English (Ibid) as in (19).

(19) ka:na ya-ʕrif bi-al-Xabar

was 3msg.write.IMP about-the-news

He knew about the news.

The imperfective aspect can also combine with the state verbs to denote stable and definite states as in (20).
Saeed loves his nephew so much.

In his comparative analysis of tense and aspect in English and Arabic, Seiny (1986) concluded that there could be no one-to-one relationship between the aspectual and tense forms and interpretation in English and Arabic. However, as far as the study is concerned, it focuses on the complete interpretation entailed by the perfective aspect and on the incomplete or ongoing interpretation denoted by the imperfective aspect in both Arabic and English. Since it is the imperfective aspect that can be considered as the source of difference between English and Arabic, table 2 summarizes the distinction between English and Arabic with respect to the distribution and interpretation of aspectual classes with the imperfective aspect. The English part is adopted from Gabriele (2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Aspectual Class</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **Activity**            | action-in-progress | action-in-progress | Maha ta-jre:
|                         | Jack is singing.   | Maha is running.  |
| **Accomplishment**      | action-in-progress | She is washing the dishes. | ya-ktub ad-daras
|                         |                     | He is writing the lesson. |
| **Achievement**         | a process leading to an endpoint | The plane is arriving. | Soha ta-dxul
|                         |                     | He is entering |
| **State**               | generally incompatible | *I am liking him. | kuna na-ʔmal bi-l-fuz
|                         |                     | We were hoping to win |

Table 2: The interaction of the imperfective aspect with the lexical classes in English and Arabic
Summarizing, Arabic expresses the perfective/imperfective distinction by means of aspect morphology on the verb. English marks the distinction differently: the past simple form with the perfective and the progressive –ing with the imperfective. The choice between the perfective and the imperfective has effects on the semantics of the verbs: the perfective entails a completion of an event and the imperfective entails an ongoing and incomplete interpretation. The distribution of the lexical aspectual classes varies across Arabic and English. All the lexical aspectual classes can be expressed by the English and Arabic perfective forms (past forms in both). On the other hand, while the marking of the imperfective is uniform across activity, accomplishment, achievement and state in Arabic conveying an ongoing process or state, it is not the same case in English. English relies on the progressive –ing with activity, accomplishment, and achievement to convey an ongoing process but the aspectual distinction is generally neutralized with the states using the past simple form (Slabakova and Montrul, 2002).

Having surveyed the aspectual markings and interpretations in both Arabic and English, it is now possible to specify what is under investigation in this study. The interaction of the accomplishments, achievements, and states with both the perfective and imperfective was examined, to be more specific, the accomplishments and achievements across both grammatical aspects where English and Arabic have similar semantic interpretations on one hand, and the states where English and Arabic clearly differ on the other hand. Activities were excluded due to their neutral viewpoint under the perfective in both English and Arabic. That is, the semantic contrast is not clear on the activities in either language.

1.5 Hypotheses of the Study

The present study is set to investigate how the native language of adult Arabic-speaking L2 learners influences the acquisition of the semantic interpretations entailed by the
perfective and imperfective aspects in English as L2. Based on the assumptions of the first half of FT/FA hypothesis, the following specific hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Since Arabic and English have similar semantic interpretations of the perfective and the imperfective aspectual markings on accomplishments and achievements, intermediate level adult Arabic-speaking English learners will have no difficulty in acquiring the interpretations of the past simple form and the progressive in both aspectual classes.

H2: Since the semantic interpretation of the imperfective aspectual marking for state verbs is different between English and Arabic, intermediate level adult Arabic-speaking English learners will incorrectly accept the use of the progressive –ing on state verbs.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

The study aims at

1. Examining the influence of the aspectual system in Arabic on the acquisition of the semantic interpretations in English aspect.

2. Demonstrating to what extent L1 transfer can aid or impede acquisition of L2 learners at intermediate proficiency level.

3. Providing a thorough picture of how aspectual semantics is acquired by examining three types of lexical categories: accomplishment, achievement and state.

4. Introducing pedagogical implications for teaching aspect in EFL classes for Arabic-speaking learners.
1.7 Significance of the study

First of all, the present study focuses on the acquisition of the interpretations of aspectual markings, a field that has recently gained an interest among second language acquisition researchers (e.g. Slabakova, 2000; Slabakova and Montrul, 2002; Gabriele, 2005; Chin, 2006). It particularly addresses the issue of L1 transfer. The investigation of L1 transfer reveals how L2 learners form hypotheses about L2 grammar based on their native language.

Another aspect that distinguishes this study is its methodology. It examines the acquisition of semantic interpretations of English aspect by intermediate level Arabic-speaking learners—a level where as Schwartz and Sprouse (1996) states L1 transfer is greater.

Thirdly, the study manifests its significance in detecting the acquisitions of three lexical aspectual categories: accomplishments, achievements and states in order to provide a comprehensive picture of how Arabic-speaking English L2 learners acquire these categories. Its inclusion of state verbs is particularly important since it has not received sufficient attention. Many previous studies under generative framework focus on the interaction between grammatical and lexical aspects in accomplishments and achievements (e.g. Slabakova, 2000; Gabriele and Martohardjono 2005; Gabriele, 2005).

Finally, the study undertakes providing pedagogical implications for teaching aspect in EFL classes for Arabic-speaking learners. Hence, it brings new insights to English instruction process: EFL teachers are more directed to the weaknesses of their students and L2 learners may overcome acquisition problems related to aspect.
1.8 Definition of Terms

**Transfer** is the influence of the native language knowledge on the acquisition of a second language.

**Interlanguage** is a term describing the language of L2 learner. Interlanguage grammar is defined as the underlying linguistic system of L2 learner.

**Fossilization** is a phenomenon whereby L2 learner's grammar is permanently non-native.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Since aspect integrates both grammatical and lexical categories, studies on the acquisition of aspect in both L1 and L2 have been addressed from different perspectives. The Primacy of Aspect Hypothesis, also known as Aspect Hypothesis, has been investigated in the main body of the acquisition research of aspect in both L1 and L2. It mainly focuses on the developmental sequence of aspect-tense morphology by analyzing the production data (e.g. Bloom et al., 1980; Stephany, 1981; Anderson, 1991; Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds, 1995; Shirai and Anderson, 1995; Al-Tarouti, 2003).

According to Slabakova (2002), aspect studies such as those adopted the Aspect Hypothesis have not tapped learner's innate semantic knowledge because they mainly focus on how the acquisition of aspectual morphology develops. Studies on the acquisition of aspect should look beyond production data and tackle the issue of the semantic component of the learner's innate knowledge (Ibid). That is, in order to understand the acquisition of aspect, a researcher should test the learner's semantic interpretations of aspectual markings as well. Currently, a number of L1 acquisition researches have looked beyond the production data and conducted experimental studies in order to investigate children's comprehension and interpretation of aspect and tense morphology. Such studies are known as comprehension studies (Wagner, 2001) (e.g. Wagner, 2001; Olbishevska 2004; Van Hout, 2005, 2008).

As for L2 acquisition of aspect, a recent body of experimental studies has also been developed to explore the acquisition of aspectual semantics from a generative framework (e.g. Slabakova, 2000; Montrul and Slabakova, 2002; Slabakova and Montrul, 2002;
Gabriele, 2005; Chin, 2006; Hawkins et al, 2008). These studies have focused on how L2 learners acquire the semantic properties of aspectual morphology since aspect stands at the interface of semantics and syntax.

In the first part of the review, some of the important studies adopted the Aspect Hypothesis in both L1 and L2 researches are briefly reviewed. The second part reviews some recent comprehension studies that explored the semantic interpretation of aspect in the realm of first language acquisition. The third part tackles studies on the acquisition of aspect in L2 under generative approach. Given the focus of the study, the researcher mainly outlines studies in the generative approach, particularly those studies that have taken L2 learner's native language into account in the acquisition of aspectual semantics.

2.2 The Aspect Hypothesis: L1 and L2 Acquisition Studies

The Aspect Hypothesis argues that the inherent lexical aspectual classes of verbs determine the early production of the aspect-tense morphology. The major findings of this model are presented as follows (from Li and Shirai 2000).

1. Learners first use (perfective) past marking on achievements and accomplishments, eventually extending use to activities and statives.

2. In languages that encode the perfective/imperfective distinction, imperfective past marking begins with statives and activities extending to accomplishments and achievements.

3. In languages that have progressive aspect, progressive marking begins with activities, then extends to accomplishments and achievements.

4. Progressive marking is not incorrectly overgeneralized to statives.
Because the Aspect Hypothesis is held to be universal, these four associations have been investigated in various languages around the world in both L1 and L2 acquisition researches.

### 2.2.1 L1 Acquisition Studies

Some of the early proponents of the Aspect Hypothesis are Bloom, Lifter, and Hafitz (1980). The overall goal of Bloom et al (1980) was to investigate the relation between the inherent semantic features of verbs and verbal inflections (-ing and -ed) by observing the spontaneous speech of four American English-speaking children. The result of the study indicated that children used past inflections on achievements and accomplishments (that is, telic verbs) and the progressive marking on activities (that is, atelic verbs). Based on their observation, Bloom et al (1980) observed that lexical aspects strongly affect the use of the verbal morphology. So there is a mapping between lexical aspect and tense in L1 acquisition. These results are supported by other studies such as Stephany (1981) among many others.

A more recent study is Al-Tarouti (2003). Al-Tarouti (2003) observed the spontaneous speech of his three Arabic-speaking children for a month in order to examine the influence of the lexical aspects on the acquisition of verbal aspect and tense morphology. Besides examining the development of perfective and imperfective verbs, he particularly investigated the development of Arabic active participle: a dual-aspect form that can express progressive/imperfective and perfective aspects. The results showed that the inherent aspectual features of verbs influence the emergence and the use of the active participle: Arab children started to use the progressive on activity verbs of active participles (atelic verbs) and use the perfective aspect on telic verbs of the active participles. As for the acquisition of the perfective and imperfective verbs: imperfective forms first appear on activities while perfective forms appear on achievements. These findings are compatible with the associations predicted by the Aspect Hypothesis.
Many studies supporting the Aspect Hypothesis demonstrate the relation between tense and aspect. However, Smith (1980) argued against such a relation. In his study (1980) with English-speaking children, he noticed that English speaking children used past tense markings on both perfective and imperfective verbs. Hence, Smith (1980) proposed that "young English-speaking children express notions of temporal ordering as well as aspectual notions". That is, tense is acquired independently from aspect. Anderson (1989), as reported in Chin (2006), argued against the mapping between tense and aspect, yet he maintained a weaker version of the Aspect Hypothesis which proposes that past tense is mainly used with telic verbs and present tense with atelic verbs. Shirai and Anderson (1995) proposed the Prototype Hypothesis which supports this weaker version of the Aspect Hypothesis.

The Prototype Hypothesis was first developed by Rosch (1973), as reported in Shirai and Anderson (1995). The Prototype Hypothesis assumes that there is a graded category membership. Within each category, there are best exemplars (the prototype), which share the most features of the category, and peripheral members of that category. In L1 acquisition, children are assumed to start to acquire a prototype of a linguistic category and later on extend to the peripheral members. Shirai and Anderson (1995) proposed that the prototypes of tense and aspect are past tense with [+telic, +punctual, +perfective] features and progressive aspect with [+atelic, +progressive, +imperfective] features. Their study of transcribed speech samples of three English-speaking children taken from CHILDIS indicated that children started to acquire the prototypical past and progressive and then gradually extended to less prototypical (peripheral) verbs.

By and large, the findings of both the Aspect Hypothesis and the Prototype Hypothesis in L1 acquisition researches are concerned with the developmental sequence of children’s innate knowledge of aspect in relation to inflectional morphology but not aspectual interpretations.
2.2.2 L2 Acquisition Studies

Following the L1 acquisition researches of aspect, L2 acquisition studies on aspect have also focused on the developmental sequence of aspect-tense morphology under the Aspect Hypothesis.

Anderson (1991) conducted longitudinal observations of two English-speaking children acquiring Spanish. Based on his observations, he proposed a sequence of the developmental stages for the acquisition of tense-aspect morphology among L2 learners till the learners achieved near-native attainment in aspectual markings: the use of the perfective markings started from achievements, then accomplishments and activities, and finally spread to states while the use of the imperfective markings started from states, then accomplishments and activities, and finally extended to achievements.

Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds' (1995) main objective was to examine the role of lexical aspect in the acquisition of the past tense. They have investigated 182 L2 English learners from a wide range of L1 background at six levels of proficiency. The participants were given a cloze test with short passages. They were asked to inflect the base form of the verbs based on the context. 62 items targeting the use of the past tense included 14 achievements, 11 accomplishments, 12 activities and 10 states. The findings of their study are compatible with Anderson's (1991). L2 learners particularly at lower proficiency levels mainly used past markings with achievements and progressive markings with activities. The developmental sequence of the acquisition of aspect-tense is assumed to be universal in SLA researches. Both Li and Shirai (2000), and Bardovi-Harlig (2000) present a comprehensive review of literature on the acquisition of L2 aspect under the framework of the Aspect Hypothesis.
2.3 Comprehensive Studies on L1 acquisition of aspect

These studies have experimental nature rather than observations of spontaneous speech. Their overall purpose is to investigate the children's comprehension and interpretation of aspect and tense morphology in L1. In one experiment, Wagner (2001) examined whether English-speaking children have the knowledge of aspect and tense to differentiate between the past and the present progressive. The children were shown a certain event such as a cat filling in a puzzle by inserting pieces into appropriate slots. In one half of the test sentences, the cat only fills in half the pieces (that is, incomplete event) in the first location and then moves to the second location where it begins filling in again. In the second half of the test sentences, the cat fills in all the pieces (that is, complete event) in the first location and then moves to the second location where it begins filling in again. While the cat was filling in the puzzle in the second location, the child was asked to show where the cat is/was filling in a puzzle. Regardless of the completion, the target response for the past progressive was always the first location and the target response for the present progressive was always the second location. The results of this experiment showed that two-year children performed better on the past progressive when the event at the first location was completed but had difficulty with the past progressive when the event was incomplete. Children did not grasp that the past progressive have incomplete entailments. Wagner (2001) suggested that children associate the meanings of is/was with the completion of events. That is, they use the inflectional morphology to encode the aspect.

Olbishevska (2004) conducted a comprehension experiment to examine whether Ukrainian-speaking children mark telicity and atelicity of the events with the help of perfective and imperfective markings respectively. The past tense was associated with both the perfective and imperfective markings in the experiment so that children's knowledge of
the concept of telicity and atelicity was explored. The usual task of sentence-picture-matching was implemented. The results showed that 2.5 to 4.5 children could equally match the past perfective with complete events and the past imperfective with incomplete events. Olbishevska (2004) argued that since children could equally comprehend the semantic contrasts between past perfective and past imperfective, the acquisition of tense is independent of aspect acquisition.

Van Hout (2005) used a sentence-picture-matching task to assess Polish-speaking children's comprehension of the aspectual contrasts. The pictures presented three kinds of events: ongoing, complete and incomplete. The results showed that 2 to 4 children correctly accepted the complete events with the perfective aspect but incorrectly accepted all the three situations with the imperfective aspect. Van Hout (2005) argued that children fully grasp the perfective aspect from an early age but it takes more time to understand the imperfective aspect.

Van Hout (2005)'s finding was supported by another aspectual comprehension experiment conducted by the researcher herself (2008). Van Hout (2008) examined the comprehension of children from different backgrounds: Dutch, Italian and Polish. The results indicated that the children of the three language backgrounds acquired the semantics of the perfective aspect earlier than that of the imperfective aspect. Therefore, she proposed a new hypothesis called Semantic Complexity which is based on the idea that children acquire early the semantics of simple aspectual operations.

The findings of Wagner (2001), and Van Hout (2005, 2008) are compatible with each other; they showed that L1 children have more difficulty acquiring the semantics of the imperfective aspect than that of the perfective aspect. However, this finding has not always
been consistent among all comprehension studies on the L1 acquisition of aspect and tense as evident in Olbishevska (2004).

### 2.4 The Generative Approach

The general assumption of generative approach to language acquisition is that acquiring a linguistic functional category requires acquiring both the inflectional morphology as well as the semantic interpretation it brings about. As far as the acquisition of aspect is concerned, the generative approach integrates the acquisition of the aspectual morphology and aspectual interpretations. This assumption motivated two lines of researches. One is concerned with the interaction between morphosyntax and semantics, that is, the mapping between the aspectual semantics to argument structures and to grammatical morphology (e.g. Slabakova, 2000; Slabakova and Montrul 2002; Montrul and Slabakova 2002; Hawkins et al, 2008). Another is more interested in exploring the semantic interpretations an L2 learner assigns to grammatical aspect (e.g. Gabriele, 2005; Chin, 2006).

The question of L1 transfer in the adult acquisition has also been addressed by researchers within generative framework. Under UG, variations across languages are assumed to be the outcome of variations of abstract principles, that is, parameters (Chomsky, 1995). For capturing aspectual variations across languages, Smith (1991/1997) proposed the parameter of aspect which postulates two different ways in which languages mark telicity in the verb [±telic]. A telic event is the one that has an inherent endpoint (that is, accomplishments and achievements) so both have [+telic] value. On the contrary, an atelic event is the one with no natural endpoint (that is, states and activities) so both have [-telic] value. Slabakova (2002) argues that such a parameter allows for investigating UG in relation to language acquisition more systematically since languages are assumed to differ parametrically as to what aspectual interpretations they assign to their markings. It also allows for examining L1 transfer. Some
of the previously mentioned studies investigate L1 influence on the acquisition of the semantic interpretations of the aspectual markings across different languages (e.g. Slabakova, 2000; Slabakova and Montrul, 2002; Gabriele, 2005; Chin, 2006). The present study follows this line of researches.

Slabakova (2000) conducted an experimental study with two groups of low and intermediate L2 learners of English: Spanish-speaking and Bulgarian-speaking learners. The study investigated the effects of the native language on the acquisition of the telicity marking in English as L2. In English and Spanish, the telicity of an event depends on the cardinality of the object. For example in English, the event is atelic with an unspecified cardinality object such as (make cakes) while the event is telic with a specified cardinality object such as (make a cake). On the other hand, the telicity of an event is marked by perfective prefix or preverb in Bulgarian. Slabakova (2000) developed an acceptability interpretation task which requires the participants to assess the combinatory telicity of two conjoined sentences on a scale of seven points ranging from -3 (illogical) to +3 (logical) as in (21). Their answers were taken to indicate their knowledge of the semantic contrasts of the aspectual markings.

\[\text{(21)}\text{ Anatonia worked in a bakery and made a cake.}\]

\[-3 \quad -2 \quad -1 \quad 0 \quad +1 \quad +2 \quad +3\]

The results showed that Bulgarian-speaking English L2 learners accurately recognized the atelic sentences but failed to detect telic sentences. On the other hand, the Spanish-speaking English L2 learners accurately recognized the contrast between telic and atelic sentences. Slabakova (2000) attributed the differences in responses to the different telicity markings instantiated in L1 grammar. This result was taken to support the first half of Full Transfer/Full Access hypothesis. The acceptability interpretation tasks developed in this study has
been implemented and developed in other studies investigating the acquisition of the semantic interpretations of L2 aspectedual markings under generative approach such as Slabakova and Montrul (2002), Gabriele (2005), Chin (2006), and Hawkins et al (2008) among others.

Slabakova and Montrul (2002) conducted an experimental study with intermediate and advanced level English-speaking Spanish L2 learners. Their study investigated both L2 learner's access to semantic properties of aspect as a functional category that are not instantiated in their native language and the connection between the L2 learner's knowledge of tense-aspect morphology and the acquisition of the semantic interpretations the morphology brings about. Two tasks were used: one targeted the L2 learners' use of the morphology for the Perterite (perfective) and Imperfect (imperfective) and the other targeted the learners' knowledge of the semantics associated with the Preterite and Imperfect. The results showed that the participants who acquired the Spanish morphology associated with the Perterite and Imperfect were sensitive to the semantic contrasts between Perterite and Imperfect morphology. This finding provided evidence to the assumption that the acquisition of a functional category entails the acquisition of the semantics, syntax and morphology associated with it. Another finding of the study showed that it is possible for L2 learners to acquire a native-like knowledge of L2 aspect which suggests access to UG.

Gabriele (2005) conducted bidirectional studies on the acquisition of aspect by Japanese-speaking and English-speaking L2 learners. Her study focused on three issues: the role of L1 grammar and the role of the input in acquiring the semantic interpretations of aspectedual markings, and the relation between the morphology and meanings of aspect. It was the first study to address the issue of learnability in the domain of aspectual semantics in order to provide a comprehensive model of the acquisition of aspect in L2. The interpretations of two
lexical aspects: accomplishments and achievements were explored under the perfective and imperfective grammatical aspects in both Japanese and English. The L2 learners were of four proficiency levels: low, intermediate, high and near-native. Native speakers as control groups were included. The aspectual interpretation task was story compatibility task where the participants were presented with stories with either complete or ongoing/incomplete events. The stories were followed by test sentences. L2 learners had to judge the compatibility of the test sentences with the stories on a 5-point scale. The results of the studies were as follows: Japanese-speaking English L2 learners recognized the incomplete/ongoing interpretation for accomplishments with the progressive marking but did not accurately recognize the incomplete/ongoing interpretation for achievements with the progressive marking in English. This finding suggests L1 transfer: the imperfective marking on the accomplishments entails incomplete/ongoing interpretations in both languages, but the imperfective marking on the achievements denotes resultative rather than incomplete/ongoing interpretation in Japanese. As for English-speaking Japanese L2 learners, similar results were found.

With regard to the issue of the input and learnability, Gabriele's (2005) study showed that the advanced learners were more successful than lower level learners in relation to adding an interpretation that is not available in L1 while L2 learners of advanced and lower proficiency levels still have difficulty preempting an interpretation that is available in L1 but not L2. Gabriele (2005) also reported that advanced learners have reached native-like attainment in some categories which suggests access to UG. So the study demonstrated evidence the supports Full Transfer/ Full Access Hypothesis. As for the connection between forms and meanings of aspect, the study implemented morphology task in both languages. The results showed that the participants performed better on this task than on the interpretation task. Accordingly, Gabriele (2005) argued that L2 learners came to have a strong command of the
inflectional morphology before acquiring the knowledge of the interpretation of these aspectual markings.

Chin (2006) investigated the effect of the native language on the L2 acquisition of the semantic interpretations associated with the perfective and imperfective aspectual markings in Spanish and English. Two experiments were conducted: one targeted the acquisition of Spanish aspect as L2 by intermediate level Chinese-speaking and English-speaking L2 learners and the other targeted the acquisition of English aspect as L2 by intermediate level Chinese-speaking and Spanish-speaking L2 learners. The interpretation tasks of the study followed Slabakova and Montrul (2002) and tested the L2 learner's interpretations of accomplishments, achievements and states under L2 perfective and imperfective markings. The results of all groups showed that L2 learners accurately recognized the semantic contrasts associated with the perfective and imperfective markings which are instantiated in their native languages, but they were not able to detect the semantic contrasts which are different between their native languages and targeted languages. This finding supports the first half of the FT/FA hypothesis. The significance of the study lied in the heterogeneous L1 backgrounds of the participants. Chin (2006) argued that investigation of the semantic knowledge of learners with different backgrounds acquiring the same L2 provides a thorough understanding of the issue of L1 transfer in the acquisition of aspect in second language acquisition studies.

2.5 Summary

This section briefly outlines some of the important studies on the acquisition of aspect under three basic frameworks: Aspect Hypothesis, comprehension L1 studies and generative approach. It mainly focuses on the generative framework given the nature of the present study. This study addresses the issue of L1 transfer explored by some of the generative
studies mentioned earlier. It adds more evidence and insight to the field as it explores this framework with Arabic-speaking adult learners at intermediate level of proficiency.

Furthermore, the tasks implemented in this study include both telic and atelic verbs, that is, accomplishments, achievements and states unlike Slabakova (2000) and Gabriele (2005) which only focus on accomplishments and achievements. By doing this, the researcher hopes to provide a thorough picture of how aspectual semantics acquired.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

To give a full picture of the study's methodology, this chapter describes the number and the background of the participants recruited for this study, the types of research instruments implemented, and the statistical methods to analyze the data. Finally, it reports limitations of the study.

3.2 Participants

Participants were 50 adult female Arabic speakers who were undergraduates majoring in English at Al-Baha University, Saudi Arabia. They had started learning English on the age of 12 or 13. All of them had studied and were still studying English in formal settings. None had studied English in a native environment. Their mean age was 20.5 and the average number of years the participants had spent studying English was 7.5. The participants were of intermediate level of English proficiency according to their performance in an independent measure of proficiency.

3.3 Research Instruments

Research instruments consisted of a background questionnaire, an English proficiency test and an acceptability interpretation test. The participants were asked to complete the background questionnaire in their native language and the other materials in English.
3.3.1 Background Questionnaire

A written questionnaire was administrated first in order to collect background information about the participants. The participants were asked about their age, language learning experience, and proficiency level. The background questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

3.3.2 English Proficiency Test

An independent measure of proficiency was secondly administrated to make sure that all the participants were of the targeted proficiency level (that is, intermediate). The implemented English proficiency test was a cloze test. Cloze tests are considered to be valid and reliable measure of overall proficiency of L2 learners (Aitken, 1977). They have been administrated in many L2 acquisition studies partly because of their significant correlation with standardized English proficiency tests and partly because the standardized English proficiency tests are time-consuming (Slabakova, 2000).

The cloze test administrated in this experiment was a one-page text adapted from "Fingerprints" on "Free Reading Comprehension Worksheets" (http://www.englishforeveryone.org). Each seventh word was omitted throughout the passage giving 40 blanks. For each blank, there were three choices. The participant had to choose one answer for each blank. Thus, the maximum score was 40. The cloze test is provided in Appendix B.

3.3.3 Acceptability Interpretation Tasks

Two types of acceptability task were implemented. The first task was designed based on Gabriele (2005) to examine the L2 learners’ interpretations of English aspectual markings on both accomplishment and achievement verbs. The task involved reading a short story followed by two test sentences: one in the past simple and the other in the present
progressive. The participant was asked to judge the compatibility of these test sentences with the story context on a scale of 5 points ranging from a score of "1" (acceptable) to a score of "5" (unacceptable). The stories were presented in the simple present so that the participants did not match with the aspectual form targeted in the test sentence. The task included five accomplishments and five achievements as follows:

- Accomplishments: *make a cake, wash the dishes, write a story, build a sandcastle and do assignments*;
- Achievements: *come, go, die, leave and arrive*.

For each verb, two story contexts were developed; the first was a complete context entailing the view of the event as a whole with a complete interpretation (the perfective aspect in the form of the past simple), and the second was an incomplete context entailing an ongoing and action-in-progress interpretation (the imperfective aspect in the form of the present progressive -ing). The accomplishment and achievement verbs chosen necessarily denote the same semantic interpretations under each context in both languages.

Moreover, ten distractor stories were provided following the same design: a short story followed by a test sentence that does not involve the notion of completion. The goal of using distractors was to ascertain the participants' understanding of the test instructions. The test was done by three native speakers of English first to make sure that there was an agreement in the answers.

In summary, there were 5 accomplishments and 5 achievements. For each verb, there were two story contexts: one was complete and the other was ongoing. For each context, there were two test sentences (one in the past simple and the other in the present progressive)
giving a total of 40 test items (20 acceptable and 20 unacceptable). Finally, there were 10 distractors (5 acceptable and 5 unacceptable). Test items were randomized.

The stories and test sentences for the accomplishment verb *make a cake* and the achievement verb *come* are presented in (22) and (23) respectively. Since English and Arabic have similar interpretations of the accomplishments and the achievements under both the perfective and imperfective aspects, the simple past should be accepted in the complete context and rejected in the incomplete context. In contrast, the present progressive should be accepted in the incomplete context and rejected in the complete story context.

(22) Accomplishment: *make a cake*

**Complete Context**

Mona is a good cook. At 4:00, she begins to make a cake for her family.

At 5:00, she serves the cake with some coffee.

- Mona made a cake. (Expected answer: 5)
- Mona is making a cake. (Expected answer: 1)

**Incomplete/Ongoing Context**

Mona is a good cook. At 4:00, she begins to make a cake for her family.

At 4:30, she mixes the batter for the cake.

- Mona made a cake. (Expected answer: 1)
- Mona is making a cake. (Expected answer: 5)
(23) Achievement: come

Complete Context

Ahmad works in Makkah. At 12:00, he gets into his car to visit his parent in Jeddah. At 1:00, he is at his parent's home in Jeddah.

- Ahmad came to his parent's home. (Expected answer: 5)

- Ahmad is coming to his parent's home. (Expected answer: 1)

Incomplete Context

Ahmad works in Makkah. At 12:00, he gets into his car to visit his parent in Jeddah. At 12:50, he is still in his car in Jeddah.

- Ahmad came to his parent's home. (Expected answer: 1)

- Ahmad is coming to his parent's home. (Expected answer: 5)

The second type of acceptability task was based on Hawkins et al. (2008), with slight modifications, to examine the learners' interpretation of the aspectual marking with the state verbs. The participant was presented with a context and a continuation and was asked to judge the acceptability of the continuation sentence with the context on a five-point scale. The task was adopted to test the aspectual acquisition of state verbs only. Five state verbs in the continuation sentences appeared in the progressive and were thus unacceptable (ungrammatical). The participants, due to native language transfer, were predicted to incorrectly accept them. The same five state verbs appeared in the past simple form with similar contexts and were thus acceptable. The participants should accept them due to L2 input. The state verbs include *need, doubt, deserve, want* and *respect*. Six distractors were provided. So in the end this task included 10 test items (5 acceptable and 5 unacceptable) and
6 distractors (3 acceptable and 3 unacceptable). Examples (24) and (25) show acceptable and unacceptable continuation sentences with the state verb *need* along with their contexts respectively. Test items were randomized. A complete list of the test items and distractors is provided in Appendix C.

(24) When Sara had a party, her mother was away. She called her sister because -she needed her help. (Expected answer: 5)

(25) Mohammad's car broke down on his way to work, so -he was needing a taxi. (Expected answer: 5)

### 3.4 Data Analysis

After calculating the mean percentage for the participants' responses on the English proficiency test, the total number of acceptability test items (66 items) was classified into the following topics: distractors of the 1\textsuperscript{st} task, distractors of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} task, simple past accomplishments, present progressive accomplishments, simple past achievements, present progressive achievements, and states. Under each topic, the means and standard deviations were counted. Finally, independent samples t-test were used for each topic to determine whether or not the distinction was significant between responses to acceptable and unacceptable items for the distractors of the 1\textsuperscript{st} task, acceptable and unacceptable items for the distractors of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} task, complete and incomplete contexts for each subtopic under the accomplishments and achievements and finally between responses to the simple past and past progressive sentences with states.
3.5 Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the present study are related to the number of the participants, the type of the proficiency test, and the exclusion of both a control group and an aspectual morphology test. First, given the nature of the study as a research project, the number of the participants was somehow limited. A large number of participants should be recruited for lengthy future researches. Secondly, although a cloze test is considered as a reliable measure of proficiency level, a standardized proficiency test such as TOEFL would be more accurate in assessing the overall proficiency level of L2 learners. A cloze test was particularly implemented in this study due to time limit. Thirdly, a control group of English native speakers was excluded in the study because the researcher could not find a sufficient number of English native speakers to recruit as a control group. Inclusion of a control group is important because it allows the researcher to compare L2 learners' knowledge of aspect to that of native speakers of the target language. Instead of a control group, the researcher consulted three native speakers of English to ensure agreement in the answers of the test items. Finally, the study did not implement a test of L2 learners' knowledge of aspectual morphology. A more comprehensive pursuit to L2 learners' acquisition of aspect should tap the knowledge of the aspectual morphology as well as the aspectual interpretation. The limitation to testing the aspectual interpretation was decided because of the nature of a research project which entails a specific time limit and a more focused investigation.

3.6 Summary

This chapter presents in detail the methodological steps of the study. Since the study focuses on the acquisition of the aspectual interpretation, tasks of interpretation acceptability were of two types as described above. Although there are some limitations regarding the
participants and the tasks and groups implemented, the study hopefully can add more insights
to the acquisition process of aspect and serve as a basis for further research.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter basically reports the results of the study's measures: English proficiency test and acceptability interpretation tasks. Then, it includes a discussion part which tackles first the important issues that arise in the data and then how the results relate to the study's hypotheses and the findings of previous studies.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 English Proficiency Test

On the English proficiency test, the participants scored 49.3%. Out of 40, the maximal score, the participants scored between 18 and 26. Hence, they were classified as having an intermediate level of English proficiency. It is important to ensure a consistent English proficiency among the participants which is the intermediate level. First, the intermediate level of English proficiency was targeted since it is the level where L1 effect manifests itself more clearly (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1996). Accordingly, the results can be attributed to L1 influence not to different proficiency levels.

4.2.2 Acceptability Interpretation Tasks

There were two types of acceptability tasks targeting the participants' knowledge of the aspectual semantics of the English perfective and imperfective: one task with accomplishments and achievements and the other with states. First, the results on the distractor sentences in both tasks are described. Then, the results on the test items of both
tasks are presented according to the classification of the aspectual classes: accomplishments, achievements and finally states.

4.2.2.1 Distractors

There were two types of distractor sentences: one for the 1st task, that is, with accomplishments and achievements and the other for the 2nd task, that is, with sates. The function of these distractors is to ascertain the participants' understanding of the tasks and instructions. Generally, these distractors do not include the targeted test verbs.

As for the distractor sentences of the first task, Figure 1 presents the participants' mean responses to these sentences. Means and standard deviations are provided in Table 3 in Appendix D.

![Figure 1: Mean responses to the distractor sentences of the 1st task](image)

The participants rated the acceptable items above 4.5 and the unacceptable ones 1.3. A paired sample t-test confirms that the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable sentences is significant ($t (49) = 47.44, p < 0.0001$) as shown in Table 4 below. This result reveals that all the participants understood the first task and were able to perform it.
### Table 4: Paired sample t-test between acceptable and unacceptable distractor sentences in the 1st task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>d.f</th>
<th>Sig. (p-value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>47.44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>0.27</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2 shows the participants' mean responses to the distractor sentences of the 2nd task. Means and standard deviations are provided in Table 5 in Appendix D.

![Bar chart showing mean responses to distractor sentences across two conditions](chart.png)

**Figure 2: Mean responses to the distractor sentences of the 2nd task**

The participants were able to rate the acceptable items above 4 and the unacceptable items close to 1.3. A paired sample t-test analysis shows a significant difference between responses to the acceptable and unacceptable sentences ($t (49) = 38.93, p > 0.0001$) as shown in Table 6 below. This result confirms that the participants were able to perform the second task.
### Paired Sample Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>d.f</th>
<th>Sig. (p-value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>38.93</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Paired sample t-test between acceptable and unacceptable distractor sentences in the 2nd task

#### 4.2.2.2 Accomplishments

The interaction of the accomplishments with both perfective and imperfective aspects is basically equivalent in both English and Arabic. That is, the simple past accomplishments denote a perfective interpretation and the progressive accomplishments denote an imperfective interpretation. Therefore, in both languages, sentences with accomplishments in the simple past are compatible with complete story contexts but not with incomplete contexts. On the other hand, sentences with accomplishments in the progressive are compatible with incomplete story contexts but not with complete contexts. Because of the similarity between English and Arabic, the study assuming full transfer predicts that the Arabic-speaking participants will correctly accept the simple past sentences with accomplishments in complete story contexts and correctly reject them in incomplete contexts. On the other hand, the participants are predicted to correctly accept the present progressive sentences with accomplishments in incomplete story contexts and correctly reject them in complete story contexts. The findings of the simple past accomplishments are presented before the present progressive accomplishments.
Simple Past Accomplishments

Figure 3 presents the mean responses to accomplishments under the past simple in both complete and incomplete story contexts. Means and standard deviations are provided in Table 7 in Appendix D.

![Figure 3: Mean responses to accomplishments in the simple past with complete and incomplete contexts](image)

For the complete contexts, the participants correctly accepted the simple past accomplishments with an average above 4.5. As for the incomplete story contexts, they correctly rejected the past simple accomplishments with an average close to 1.7. A paired sample t-test analysis, as shown in Table 8 below, indicates that there is a significant distinction between responses to the simple past sentences with complete and incomplete contexts ($t(49) = 25.83, p > 0.0001$). So the results conform to the study's prediction.
Paired sample statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Mean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete</td>
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<td>4.59</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incomplete</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Paired sample t-test between complete and incomplete contexts in the simple past accomplishments

**Present Progressive Accomplishments**

Figure 4 shows the mean responses for the present progressive sentences with accomplishments in both complete and incomplete contexts. Means and standard deviations are provided in Table 9 in Appendix D.

![Figure 4: Mean responses to accomplishments in the present progressive with complete and incomplete contexts](image)

The participants correctly rejected the present progressive accomplishments in complete contexts and also correctly accepted the present progressive accomplishments in incomplete contexts. They averaged at 1.9 with complete contexts and at 4.45 with incomplete contexts. A paired sample t-test analysis reveals a significant distinction between responses to the present progressive sentences with complete and incomplete contexts ($t (49) = -17.57, p <$
0.0001) as shown in Table 10 below. Therefore, the participants' responses on the present progressive accomplishments match the study's prediction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired sample statistics</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Paired sample t-test between complete and incomplete contexts in the present progressive accomplishments

4.2.2.3 Achievements

The semantic interpretations under achievements are basically similar to those under accomplishments in both English and Arabic. Sentences with achievements in the simple past denote a perfective interpretation and hence are compatible with complete story contexts but not with incomplete contexts. On the other hand, the present progressive sentences under achievements indicate an imperfective interpretation and hence are compatible with incomplete story contexts but not with complete contexts. Therefore, assuming full transfer, the participants are predicted to correctly accept the simple past achievements with complete contexts and correctly accept the present progressive achievements with incomplete story contexts. The results of the simple past achievements are presented prior to the results of the present progressive achievements.

Simple Past Achievements

Figure 5 shows the participants' mean responses to the simple past sentences with achievements in both complete and incomplete story contexts. Means and standard deviations are provided in Table 11 in Appendix D.
Figure 5: Mean responses to achievements in the simple past with complete and incomplete contexts

The participants correctly accepted the simple past achievements in complete story contexts with an average above 4.5. They also correctly rejected the simple past achievements in incomplete contexts with an average of 1.9. A paired sample t-test analysis, as shown in Table 12 below, indicates a significant distinction between responses to simple past achievements with complete and incomplete contexts ($t (49) = 21.50$, $p < 0.0001$). So the participants' responses conform to the study's prediction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
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<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>d.f</th>
<th>Sig. (p-value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>21.50</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

Table 12: Paired sample t-test between complete and incomplete contexts in the simple past achievements
*Present Progressive Achievements*

Figure 6 presents the mean responses for the present progressive sentences with achievements in complete and incomplete contexts. Means and standard deviations are provided in Table 13 in Appendix D.

![Figure 6: Mean responses to achievements in the present progressive with complete and incomplete contexts](image)

The participants correctly rejected the present progressive achievements in complete contexts with an average below 2 and correctly accepted them in incomplete contexts with an average of 4.3. A paired sample t-test analysis shows that there is a significant distinction between responses to the present progressive achievements in complete and incomplete contexts ($t(49) = -17.70$, $p < 0.0001$) as shown in Table 14 below. So the participants' responses match the study's prediction.
### Paired sample statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
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<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>d.f</th>
<th>Sig. (p-value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>-2.32</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>-17.70</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Paired sample t-test between complete and incomplete contexts in the present progressive achievements

#### 4.2.2.4 States

The interaction of states with the grammatical aspects is somehow different between English and Arabic. The source of difference is the imperfective aspect. While Arabic freely encodes a state extended over a period of time with the imperfective aspectual morphology, English generally does not encode states with the progressive marking –ing, that is, the aspectual distinction between perfective and imperfective is generally neutralized using the simple past forms. Considering full transfer hypothesis, the participants are predicted to incorrectly accept the use of the progressive marking with the states. Due to L2 input, the participants are also predicted to correctly accept the use of the past simple on states.

Figure 7 shows the mean responses to simple past and past progressive sentences with states. Means and standard deviations are provided in Table 15 in Appendix D.
Figure 7: Mean responses to states in simple past and past progressive

The participants correctly accepted the simple past sentences under states with an average above 4.5. They also incorrectly accepted the past progressive sentences with states with an average of 4.1. A paired sample t-test analysis, as shown in Table 16 below, indicates that there is no significant distinction between responses to states in simple past and past progressive (t (49) = 5.31, p > 0.05). So the participants' responses to states match the study's prediction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>d.f</th>
<th>Sig. (p-value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple Past</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Progressive</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16: Paired sample t-test between simple past and past progressive with states

4.3 Discussion

The present study explores the role of the native language and whether it aids or impedes the acquisition of aspect in L2 English. It particularly investigates the hypothesis that
language learners' native language constitutes the initial state of L2 acquisition (Full Transfer). Accordingly, two hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Since Arabic and English have similar semantic interpretations of the perfective and the imperfective aspeccial markings on accomplishments and achievements, intermediate level adult Arabic-speaking English learners will have no difficulty in acquiring the interpretations of the past simple form and the progressive in both aspeccial classes.

H2: Since the semantic interpretation of the imperfective aspeccial marking for state verbs is different between English and Arabic, intermediate level adult Arabic-speaking English learners will incorrectly accept the use of the progressive –ing on state verbs.

The findings of the experiments reported above indicate that L1 does have a significant effect. As for the first task, the participants significantly gave high scores to the simple past sentences with accomplishments and achievements in complete contexts and to the present progressive sentences with achievements and accomplishments in incomplete contexts (above 4). They also significantly gave low scores to the simple past sentences with accomplishments and achievements in incomplete contexts and to the present progressive sentences with accomplishments and achievements in complete contexts (below 2). So the adult intermediate level Arabic-speaking English learners were significantly sensitive to the aspeccial distinction between perfective and imperfective encodings and interpretations on accomplishments and achievements because such a distinction is initiated in their L1 Arabic. It can be concluded that the acquisition of L2 English aspect on accomplishments and achievements is proceeded with relative ease by Arabic-speaking L2 learners due to L1 transfer. So H1 is confirmed.
The Second task was particularly designed to explore the acquisition of states. After establishing that the participants significantly perceived the distinction between the perfective and imperfective encodings and interpretations as Task (1) revealed, Task (2) investigated whether or not adult intermediate level Arabic-speaking English learners incorrectly overgeneralized the use of the imperfective marking on states. The finding on this experiment shows that the participants incorrectly gave high scores to the past progressive sentences on states (above 4). This finding is important when relating to L1 transfer. Since Arabic allows the use of the imperfective on state verbs, the intermediate level adult Arabic-speaking English learners incorrectly accepted the use of the progressive –ing on English states. So it can be concluded that the acquisition of L2 English aspect on states is proceeded with difficulty due to L1 transfer. So H2 is confirmed. This finding is also important because it reflects a problematic area for L2 Arab learners in acquiring English aspectual system of state verbs that can determine the means of instruction of English aspect in formal settings. The next chapter proposes some pedagogical implications.

With respect to the previous studies on the acquisition of L2 aspect, the findings of Slabakova (2000), Slabakova and Montrul (2002), and Gabriele (2005) give evidence that supports Full Transfer/ Full Access Hypothesis. As for transfer, their studies along with Chin (2006) show that similarities in aspectual systems between L1 and L2 facilitate the acquisition of L2 aspect while the differences between L1 and L2 cause difficulty in the acquisition of L2 aspect. As for UG access, their studies reveal that advanced L2 learners can reach a native-like attainment in acquiring L2 aspect which suggests access to UG. Although these studies used somehow different assessments and measures from the present study's, its findings further confirm their findings as far as transfer is concerned. Therefore, this study
gives evidence to the hypothesis that L1 grammar constitutes the initial state of L2 learners' interlanguage grammar which supports the first half of Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

After reporting and discussing the results of the present study, this chapter concludes the study by first discussing the status of the progressive state verbs in everyday spoken English today, then proposing some pedagogical implications for teaching English aspect to Arabic-speaking L2 English learners, and finally summarizing the present study's findings and stating its contributions and some possible suggestions for further research.

5.2 States in the Progressive Aspect and Spoken English Today

One of the diagnostics proposed to determine the stativity of verbs is that only nonstative verbs are found in the progressive (Dowty, 1979). So a sentence like (26) is grammatically incorrect.

(26) *I am knowing the answer.

However, not all state verbs fit in the test. A certain number of states can have dual functions: one is stative and the other is dynamic such as think and see in (27) and (28) respectively.

(27) The verb: think

a. Stative function: have an opinion

   I think this exhibition is great.

b. Dynamic function: consider (mental and intellectual process)
I am thinking how to spend my next vacation.

(28) The verb: see

a. Stative function: the actual act of seeing with your eyes/ understand

   I see her going.

   I see what you mean.

b. Dynamic function: meet/ have a relationship with

   I am seeing John tomorrow.

   Jack is seeing Mary.

Sentences like (27a) and (28a) correspond to the semantic features of states [- telic, -punctual, -dynamic]. On the other hand, sentences like (27b) and (28b) have dynamic nature, that is, they can have an endpoint. These state verbs, as stated earlier, are restricted to a limited number in appropriate contexts. Now let us turn to the modern use of states in the progressive in spoken English.

Sentences like "I am liking the game" and "I am understanding you" begin to be common in spoken English today. Such constructions are increasingly popular in English TV series and commercials. The slogan of McDonalds "I'm loving it" is one example of an incorrect grammatical construction which, because of its popularity, found its way in everyday spoken English. A closer investigation reveals that their use denotes a change in meaning. Here are some meanings:

- Expressing a dynamic mental process

(29) I'm understanding more and more about it.
• Denoting an entrance to a state

(30) I'm sensing that no one is happy with the new change.

• Intensifying a state

(31) I'm really enjoying the game.

• Expressing a temporary state

(32) She's being jerk.

Such constructions appear to be more conversational and informal in tone. Smieczinska (2003) examined to what extent the semantic features of state verbs impose their choice of the progressive aspect in certain contexts. She reported on a survey held among 30 undergraduate native speakers of American English. The questionnaire consisted of 14 state verbs appearing in the progressive aspect. The participants were asked to judge their acceptability in appropriate contexts. Although she reported a strong tendency among young native speakers to accept the progressive states in appropriate contexts, the results show that the context is not the defining factor in the choice of the progressive form but rather the semantic stativity of the verbs determines the choice of the progressive form. For many participants, these constructions appear rather odd.

In conclusion, this short discussion is not to counter one of the claims this research study is based upon. It is meant to point some issues worthy of consideration. The difference between the treatments of states in the imperfective aspect between English and Arabic is clear: whereas Arabic does allow state verbs in the imperfective, English normally rules out the use of the state verbs in the progressive. As for Arabic-speaking English learners, the overlapping use of English state verbs should be brought into their attentions in order to reach
a more targetlike use of English state verbs. The following section proposes a pedagogical implication.

5.3 Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the study reveal that the native language does influence the acquisition of L2 aspect. One problematic issue facing the Arab L2 learners is the overgeneralization of the use of the progressive aspect on state verbs due to L1 transfer. Hence, there is a need for a pedagogical approach to help learners to acquire a more targetlike use of English state verbs.

First of all, L2 learners should be introduced to the distinction between action and state verbs. Then, authentic texts whether spoken or written should be used along noticing exercises. Noticing exercises aim at directing the learners' attention to a certain language point in order to help them to notice it. Its prime goal is to encourage learners to notice the difference between the input and their own production in order for them to revise their interlanguage rules (Schmidt, 1990). In teaching English state verbs, noticing should be directed to the use of the target form-meaning associations. For example, after presenting an authentic text, the learners are encouraged to focus on the use of the state verbs by asking them to identify the occurrences of these verbs in the text, their use under the simple past, their use under the progressive if there is any and the contrast between their use in the past and the progressive. Following such exercises, the learners are engaged in a discussion about the difference in the meanings of state verbs in the past and the progressive along the text. Additional exercises that primarily emphasize the use of the past simple with states should follow. Another type of noticing exercises is one which invites L2 learners to compare between the uses of action and state verbs under the simple past simple and progressive. Noticing is not to be restricted to one-class time. An EFL teacher should from time to time
bring to the learners' attention a common error in their spoken or written production of state verbs and discuss this error.

The importance of using noticing in teaching English aspectual system is gleaned from the fact that noticing is a process of learning rather than teaching. Teachers' main role is to guide learners who should themselves notice. It is an inner psychological process that takes place gradually within learners until something is learnt. With this in mind and with a skillful teacher who makes use of every opportunity at hand, noticing in itself can be powerful in motivating L2 learners to produce a more targetlike use of English aspectual system.

5.4 Conclusion

The study's research question is addressed to investigate whether or not there is an L1 transfer in the acquisition of the semantic interpretations entailed by the perfective and the imperfective aspectual marking in English as L2 by adult native speakers of Arabic with intermediate proficiency of English. Adopting the generative theory of full transfer, two hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Since Arabic and English have similar semantic interpretations of the perfective and the imperfective aspectual markings on accomplishments and achievements, intermediate level adult Arabic-speaking English learners will have no difficulty in acquiring the interpretations of the past simple form and the progressive in both aspectual classes.

H2: Since the semantic interpretation of the imperfective aspectual marking for state verbs is different between English and Arabic, intermediate level adult Arabic-speaking English learners will incorrectly accept the use of the progressive –ing on state verbs.

The findings of the study confirm the study's hypotheses. So the study provides evidence to the native language transfer in the acquisition of L2 English aspect. It also reveals that the
interference of L1 contributes to aiding or impeding the acquisition of L2 aspect. Since the language learners' L1 Arabic causes difficulty in acquiring English state verbs, the study suggests a pedagogical implication to facilitate the acquisition process.

Examining the effects of language transfer on the acquisition of L2 aspe\ntual semantics opens new fields for query. Investigating the effect of L1 transfer on the acquisition of the semantic interpretations of other linguistic elements will bring new insights to the SLA research. As for the present study, its scope is limited to explore the interaction of the native language effect with the intermediate proficiency of Arabic-speaking L2 learners. Further research is needed to explore the influence of advanced proficiency on language transfer in order to see whether the difficulty of the imperfective aspect with states can eventually be overcome or it is a possible candidate for fossilization.
References


Appendix A

Background Questionnaire

Please fill in the following questionnaire. The information provided by you will only be used for research purposes. Anyone other than the researcher will not have access to the information provided.

Age:.............

How old were you when you started studying English? For how long?

Have you ever studied English abroad? If yes, where and for how long?

Have you ever lived in a country where English is spoken? If yes, where and for how long?

Please rate your proficiency in English on a 5-point scale? (Your proficiency in your native language is 5)
Appendix B

English Proficiency Test

In the following passage, some of the words have been replaced by spaces which are numbered from (1) to (40). Read the complete text carefully in order to understand it. The reread it and choose the correct answer for each space from the list of words on the answer sheet. Please, circle your choice on the answer sheet.

Fingerprints

If you enjoy watching crime shows …(1)… TV, you probably know that fingerprints …(2)… a large role in identifying people. …(3)…, you might be surprised to discover…(4)… using fingerprints for identification is not …(5)… new science. When Babylon people agreed …(6)… a contract for business deals, they …(7)… to press fingerprints into the clay …(8)… which the contract was written. Thumbprints …(9)… also been found on clay seals …(10)… ancient China.

Sir William James Herschel …(11)… thought to be the first European …(12)… realize that our fingerprints were unique …(13)… each person. Firstly, in his work …(14)… chief magistrate in the Hoogly district …(15)… Jungipoor, India, Herschel asked people to …(16)… their handprints on contracts. Herschel believed …(17)… personal contact with the contracts made …(18)… more likely to keep promises and …(19)… commitments. Then, as he looked at …(20)… handprints, he began to see that …(21)… the handprints were different. He started …(22)… believe that fingerprints were unique, and …(23)… . To prove this, Herschel kept track …(24)… his own fingerprints over his entire …(25)… .

Dr. Henry Faulds, a British surgeon …(26)… at a local Japanese hospital, began …(27)… furrows on fingertips in 1870. He …(28)… an article in a scientific journal …(29)… using the fingerprints as a tool …(30)… identification. He devised a system of …(31)…
fingerprints. He wrote Charles Darwin about particular findings, but Charles Darwin was old to work on the findings. He promised to pass the information his cousin, Sir Francis Galton. Using Henry Faulds’s, Galton published a major book on fingerprints. His work with Sir Edward R. Henry fingerprint classification was the basis of classification system which is still used law enforcement agencies in English–speaking countries.
## Answer Sheet

Mark the answer for each space number by circling your choice.

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>a. on</td>
<td>b. in</td>
<td>c. at</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>a. put</td>
<td>b. play</td>
<td>c. take</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>a. But</td>
<td>b. Moreover</td>
<td>c. And</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>a. which</td>
<td>b. that</td>
<td>c. it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>b. any</td>
<td>c. a</td>
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<td>b. to</td>
<td>c. with</td>
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<td>b. accustomed</td>
<td>c. asked</td>
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<td>b. with</td>
<td>c. to</td>
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<td>b. have had</td>
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<td>b. is</td>
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<td>b. who</td>
<td>c. to</td>
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<td>b. by</td>
<td>c. for</td>
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<td>b. by</td>
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<td>b. in</td>
<td>c. with</td>
<td></td>
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<td>b. put</td>
<td>c. give</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>b. that</td>
<td>c. in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>a. attendants</td>
<td>b. officials</td>
<td>c. people</td>
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<td>(19)</td>
<td>a. honor</td>
<td>b. please</td>
<td>c. have</td>
<td></td>
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<td>b. more</td>
<td>c. most</td>
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<td>(21)</td>
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<td>b. some</td>
<td>c. not</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(22)</td>
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<td>b. in</td>
<td>c. to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>b. un-change</td>
<td>c. unchanging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(24)</td>
<td>a. of</td>
<td>b. with</td>
<td>c. for</td>
<td></td>
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<td>(25)</td>
<td>a. daytime</td>
<td>b. lifetime</td>
<td>c. time</td>
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<td>b. works</td>
<td>c. working</td>
<td></td>
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<td>(27)</td>
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<td>b. studied</td>
<td>c. study</td>
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<td>b. submitted</td>
<td>c. published</td>
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<td>b. for</td>
<td>c. about</td>
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<td>a. with</td>
<td>b. to</td>
<td>c. in</td>
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<td>b. classifying</td>
<td>c. classify</td>
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<td>b. this</td>
<td>c. that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(33)</td>
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<td>b. too</td>
<td>c. not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(34)</td>
<td>a. However</td>
<td>b. Also</td>
<td>c. And</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>(35)</td>
<td>a. for</td>
<td>b. to</td>
<td>c. from</td>
<td></td>
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<td>(36)</td>
<td>a. fingerprints</td>
<td>b. findings</td>
<td>c. article</td>
<td></td>
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<td>(38)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(39)</td>
<td>a. from</td>
<td>b. with</td>
<td>c. by</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Acceptability Interpretation Tasks

The First Acceptability Task

Instructions: Read the following short stories carefully. Under each story, you will read one or two sentences. Read the stories and the sentences carefully and then decide whether you can say the sentences in the story contexts. All the sentences are grammatical, so you are NOT asked to judge whether the sentence is grammatical or ungrammatical. You should pay attention to how the story ends.

You will be asked to judge the sentences on a scale of 1-5 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
<td>Somewhat Unacceptable</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>Somewhat Acceptable</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test Items:

Accomplishments

(1a) Complete Context

Mona is a good cook. At 4:00, she begins to make a cake for her family. At 5:00, she serves the cake with some coffee.
- Mona made a cake.
- Mona is making a cake.

(1b) Incomplete Context

Mona is a good cook. At 4:00, she begins to make a cake for her family. At 4:30, she mixes the batter for the cake.
- Mona made a cake.
- Mona is making a cake.

(2a) Complete Context

Amal's mother asks her to wash the dishes. At 8:00, Amal starts to wash the dishes in the sink. At 8:30, all the dishes are clean.
- Amal washed the dishes.
- Amal is washing the dishes.

(2b) Incomplete Context

Amal's mother asks her to wash the dishes. At 8:00, Amal starts to wash the dishes in the sink. At 8:15, she washes more dishes.
- Amal washed the dishes.
-Amal is washing the dishes.

(3a) Complete Context

Sami is a writer. In April, he starts to write a picture story for children. In September, he shows his friend a copy of his book.
- Sami wrote a picture story for children.
- Sami is writing a picture story for children.

(3b) Incomplete Context

Sami is a writer. In April, he starts to write a picture story for children. In June, he writes the third chapter.
- Sami wrote a picture story for children.
- Sami is writing a picture story for children.

(4a) Complete Context

Reem goes to the beach with sisters. At 2:00, she starts to build a sandcastle. At 3:00, she shows the sandcastle to her sisters.
- Reem built a sandcastle at the beach.
- Reem is building a sandcastle at the beach.

(4b) Incomplete Context

Reem goes to the beach with sisters. At 2:00, she starts to build a sandcastle. At 2:30, she shapes the door of the castle.
- Reem built a sandcastle at the beach.
- Reem is building a sandcastle at the beach.

(5a) Complete Context

Ali is a university student. He has many assignments to do. At 6:00, he decides to do them. At 8:00, all the assignments are done.
- Ali did his assignments.
- Ali is doing his assignments.

(5b) Incomplete Context

Ali is a university student. He has many assignments to do. At 6:00, he decides to do them. At 7:00, he does the third one. It is a hard work.
- Ali did his assignments.
- Ali is doing his assignments.

Achievements

(6a) Complete Context

Ahmad works in Makkah. At 12:00, he gets into his car to visit his parent in Jeddah. At 1:00, he is at his parent's home in Jeddah.
- Ahmad came to his parent's home.
- Ahmad is coming to his parent's home.

(6b) Incomplete Context
Ahmad works in Makkah. At 12:00, he gets into his car to visit his parent in Jeddah. At 12:50, he is still in his car in Jeddah.

- Ahmad came to his parent's home.
- Ahmad is coming to his parent's home.

(7a) Complete Context

Ziyad decides to buy some candies for his little brothers. At 3:00, he leaves his home to go to the supermarket. At 3:30, he is in the supermarket.

- Ziyad went to the supermarket.
- Ziyad is going to the supermarket.

(7b) Incomplete Context

Ziyad decides to buy some candies for his little brothers. At 3:00, he leaves his home to go to the supermarket. At 3:15, he is two blocks from the supermarket.

- Ziyad went to the supermarket.
- Ziyad is going to the supermarket.

(8a) Complete Context

Maha's grandmother is very sick. On Saturday, the doctor says that she should stay in the hospital. On Tuesday, the doctor says that the grandmother is dead. Maha is very upset.

- The grandmother died at the hospital.
- The grandmother is dying at the hospital.

(8b) Incomplete Context

Maha's grandmother is very sick. On Saturday, the doctor says that she should stay in the hospital. On Tuesday, the doctor says that the grandmother might die. Maha is very worried.

- The grandmother died at the hospital.
- The grandmother is dying at the hospital.

(9a) Complete Context

Sultan decides to leave his hometown. On the morning, he is at the airport. By noon, he is in another town.

- Sultan left his hometown.
- Sultan is leaving his hometown.

(9b) Incomplete Context

Sultan decides to leave his hometown. On the morning, he is at the airport. It is one hour later, he waits for his flight.

- Sultan left his hometown.
- Sultan is leaving his hometown.

(10a) Complete Context

At 4:00, the train starts to move. At 6:00, the train is near the station. At 6:30, all the passengers are at the station.

- The train arrived at the station.
- The train is arriving at the station.
(10b) Incomplete Context

At 4:00, the train starts to move. At 6:00, the train is near the station. At 6:00, the train is still on the move.
- The train arrived at the station.
- The train is arriving at the station.

Distractors

Acceptable

(11) Ali has a little brother. Today he feeds the monkey at the zoo with his brother.
- Ali is at the zoo with his brother.

(12) On Fridays, Anas walks at the park near home. Today he walks at the park with his friend.
- Anas is at the park with his friend.

(13) Mona likes to cook traditional food. Tonight she cooks Kabsa for her family.
- Mona cooks traditional food for her family.

(14) Khaled and his family like to go to the beach. Today they play football at the beach.
- Khaled is at the beach with his family.

(15) Maha is an art teacher at a secondary school. Today she teaches the students how to make pottery.
- Maha teaches art for secondary school students.

Unacceptable

(16) Salma goes shopping with her friend. Today she buys an expensive jacket with her friend.
- Salma is at the shop with her sister today.

(17) Amal is an English teacher. Today she teaches the students how to introduce themselves in English.
- Amal does not speak English.

(18) Ahmad works at a bank. Today he feels sick and does not go to work.
- Ahmad is at the bank today.

(19) Sara comes to her parent's home every Friday. This Friday she watches a movie with her sister.
- Sara is at her friend's home this Friday.

(20) Ziyad works at a local clinic. Today he meets some old friends at a café.
- Ziyad is at the clinic today.

The Second Acceptability Task
**Instructions:** Now read the following sentences carefully and then judge whether the last sentence of each item is acceptable with their contexts on a scale of 1-5 as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
<td>Somewhat Unacceptable</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>Somewhat Acceptable</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Test Items:**

Past Simple (Acceptable)

(21) We worked very hard on the presentation of our project but we did not win. Still, - Many respected our efforts.

(22) When Sara had a party, her mother was away. She called her sister because -she needed her help.

(23) Ali came home from school with a black eye. He told his mother that he fell down the stairs at school but - his mother doubted his story.

(24) It was Sally's birthday. I bought her a new jacket but she was not happy because - she wanted a bicycle for her birthday.

(25) The boys did their best in the school competition but they lost. -they deserved to win.

Past Progressive (Unacceptable)

(26) We offered the best services for our clients a year ago. Back then, -many people were respecting our work.

(27) Mohammad's car broke down on his way to work, - so he was needing a taxi.

(28) The suspect insisted that he never met the victim but - the detective was doubting his story.

(29) I brought chocolate candies to the kids. Everyone took some except Leen. - She was wanting a strawberry candy

(30) Mona studied very well but she flunked. - She was deserving to pass the exam.

**Distractors**

Acceptable

(31) When I was at work yesterday, I had an urgent call. - So, I left work immediately.

(32) Ahamd wanted to avoid the rush hour. - So, he left early.
(33) My father did not like the painting of our house.
- So, he hired some workers to paint it again.

Unacceptable

(34) Sami heard the sound of a piano in the next room.
- Maybe his brother was playing football.

(35) My friend tried to speak Spanish.
- So she attended French classes.

(36) My brother had an important football match.
So, he went shopping with his friends.
Appendix D

Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentences</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Acceptable Mean</th>
<th>Acceptable Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Unacceptable Mean</th>
<th>Unacceptable Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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Table 3: Means and standard deviations on distractor sentences in the 1st task

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<th>Sentences</th>
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<th>Acceptable Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Unacceptable Mean</th>
<th>Unacceptable Std. Deviation</th>
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<td>4.60</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>1.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>4.53</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>0.68</td>
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</table>

Table 5: Means and standard deviations on distractor sentences in the 2nd task

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<tr>
<th>Sentences</th>
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<th>Complete Mean</th>
<th>Complete Std. Deviation</th>
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<th>Incomplete Std. Deviation</th>
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<td>0.80</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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</table>

Table 7: Means and standard deviations for simple past sentences with accomplishments in complete and incomplete contexts
| Sentences | N | Complete | | | Incomplete | | |
|-----------|---|----------|---------|---|----------|---------|
|           |   | Mean     | Std. Deviation | Mean | Std. Deviation |
| 1         | 50 | 2.48     | 1.58 | 4.38 | 1.12 |
| 2         | 50 | 1.68     | 1.19 | 4.60 | 0.81 |
| 3         | 50 | 1.94     | 1.24 | 4.30 | 1.00 |
| 4         | 50 | 1.86     | 1.11 | 4.36 | 0.90 |
| 5         | 50 | 1.64     | 1.23 | 4.60 | 0.64 |
| **Total** | 250 | 1.92     | 1.30 | 4.45 | 0.96 |

Table 9: Means and standard deviations for present progressive sentences with accomplishments in complete and incomplete contexts

| Sentences | N | Complete | | | Incomplete | | |
|-----------|---|----------|---------|---|----------|---------|
|           |   | Mean     | Std. Deviation | Mean | Std. Deviation |
| 1         | 50 | 4.60     | 0.78 | 1.78 | 1.20 |
| 2         | 50 | 4.48     | 0.95 | 2.40 | 1.43 |
| 3         | 50 | 4.88     | 0.48 | 1.22 | 0.47 |
| 4         | 50 | 4.74     | 0.63 | 1.96 | 1.37 |
| 5         | 50 | 4.30     | 1.11 | 2.24 | 1.32 |
| **Total** | 250 | 4.60     | 0.84 | 1.92 | 1.27 |

Table 11: Means and standard deviations for simple past sentences with achievements in complete and incomplete contexts

| Sentences | N | Complete | | | Incomplete | | |
|-----------|---|----------|---------|---|----------|---------|
|           |   | Mean     | Std. Deviation | Mean | Std. Deviation |
| 1         | 50 | 2.04     | 1.41 | 4.36 | 1.03 |
| 2         | 50 | 2.48     | 1.63 | 4.08 | 1.37 |
| 3         | 50 | 1.26     | 0.75 | 4.68 | 0.71 |
| 4         | 50 | 2.04     | 1.40 | 4.36 | 1.12 |
| 5         | 50 | 2.06     | 1.38 | 4.00 | 1.25 |
| **Total** | 250 | 1.98     | 1.39 | 4.30 | 1.13 |

Table 13: Means and standard deviations for present progressive sentences with achievements in complete and incomplete contexts
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentences</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Simple Past</th>
<th>Past Progressive</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
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<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>250</td>
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<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: Means and standard deviations for simple past and past progressive sentences with states